

Provenance of our Logo

Well, we have a new corporate logo! Perhaps, as the resident expert on the University Arms, it is appropriate to examine the provenance of this new logo.

There are two main components: the graphic and the text. Let's take the graphic first. The lion in the University's Arms is related to the lion in the Tasmanian flag, but it is not the same. Ours is better fed for example, and has blue claws and tongue. The emaciated Tasmanian Flag lion is outlined in black, is described as 'passant' = walking, and is holding its right front paw up as though it should be resting on something but isn't. This is a curious pose for an animal renowned for long bouts of sleep, especially the male sex which our one is, leaving most of the hunting to the lionesses. It may have been taken from the Crest of the Tasmanian Arms where yet another red lion looking much the same (now described as 'statant' = standing) is resting its paw on a crossed spade and pick-axe. Maybe these have just fallen off the Flag.

Still, the person who suggested the parts of the University's Arms (Harry Holder from Launceston) said that our lion was modeled after the Tasmanian Flag lion. The heraldic 'lion' dates back to the earliest European heraldry, but from c1200 a lion passant began to be called a 'leopard', mane or not, spotted or not. The colonies don't pay much attention to such distinctions; especially neither lions nor leopards roam Australia.

But the graphic is *not* just the lion. Our lion is carrying a flaming torch. In suggesting this torch, Harry Holder said it signified the sporting achievements of the University, in other words an Olympic torch. The Registrar of the day, Mr Preshaw, was not amused and wrote to the commissioned London artist Kruger Gray that it was a 'torch of learning' shining its light on all. Be that as it may, the new logo incorporates two elements from the Arms (not one), although unfortunately they are of African and European origin. We've dropped the 'book of knowledge' and the Southern Cross signifying our location, probably because many Australian universities use the same symbols.

Let me turn to the pseudo-word 'UTAS'. I have to call it that since it is not an acronym nor an abbreviation, but a made-up word. Clearly not English. Looks rather like something Tarzan might say (said like *oo-taz* more than *you-taz*). It looks a bit like Latin also (for example a whole range of abstract nouns like *vanitas* = vanity) so I

checked and no Latin word has an ending *-utas*, let alone a whole word. Nope, no hope except *unitas*, which of course has been used by the TUU for many years as a classical pun (Uni Tas = the institution and *unitas* = unity). Since Roman inscriptions did not usually have word spaces, an alternative parsing is 'UT/AS' yielding UT = that, how, how as that; and AS = copper coin of negligible value, yielding 'how is that worth a farthing?' However the red E suggests that we really should break the word at U/TAS. So where did UTAS come from?

As I noted before, for many years the University used 'Uni Tas' as its usual abbreviation if it used one, and in line with British usage we talked about 'going to uni' or 'going to varsity'. No-one says 'I am going to U' although I have heard recently 'I am going to Utas'. The earliest use of 'utas' I have been able to trace is in the Internet era (you knew I had a discipline angle on this, didn't you?), when AARNet was created in 1989 and the Australian universities jumped into the Internet era. Some unidentified person chose the letters 'utas' to signify our domain in the Internet world as in Arthur.Sale@utas.edu.au, or www.utas.edu.au. Similarly for most other universities at the time such as 'usyd', 'uq', 'anu', though some others eschewed the 'u' such as 'monash', 'griffith' and the exception 'unimelb' (they hedged their bets and took 'umelb' as well). I think the evidence is that this was a borrowing from common USA Internet usage, whose university T-shirts often bear text such as 'UCLA' and 'Wake Forest U'. From there 'utas' has grown in application and use, until today it is probably the most common abbreviation for our University.

To summarize, our new logo has a respectable but not entirely legitimate provenance deriving back to 776 BCE or earlier, c1100, and 1989. It draws on Africa, Europe and the Americas for inspiration. I like this contrast between the old and the new and the cross-continental fertilization, although these factors were probably unrealized by the designers.

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